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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRAGUE 001349

SIPDIS

EUR/NCE FOR FICHTE

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TAGS: PGOV GG EZ PREL RS

SUBJECT: CZECH ARMS TRANSFERS TO GEORGIA: PRACTICAL STEPS
TO AVOID LICENSING DELAYS AND DENIALS

REF: A. IIR 6 824 0046 05

¶B. PRAGUE 1004

¶C. IIR 6 824 0037 05

Classified By: Political-Military Officer Brian Greaney for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

1) (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 8.

2) (C) Summary: In light of both the large volume of Czech ammunition being transferred to Georgia under USG-directed programs, and subsequent Russian complaints about these transfers, the Czech government will be taking a closer look at future license applications. The Czechs support efforts to bolster Georgian capabilities, but are concerned about potential instability in the region as well as the potential impact on Russian relations with the CR and NATO. The GOCR believes any public discussion on this matter is unhelpful, and asked that the United States refrain from raising the profile of these transfers. The Czechs plan to conduct an analysis of the appropriateness of arms transfers to Georgia in the near future. USG information sharing with the Czechs may be the key to ensuring their continued cooperation. U.S. Embassy Prague has assisted on these cases in the past. We believe early information-sharing with the Czechs on USG plans to procure Czech arms for transfer to Georgia may reduce the risk of Czech delays or license refusals in the future. Contact information for Embassy Prague on this issue is provided in para 8. End summary.

3) (C) ADCM and Pol-Mil Off September 14 discussed U.S. transfers of Czech arms/ammunition to Georgia with Acting Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Martin Povejsil and CFSP Director Petr Kaiser. The discussion stemmed from GOCR concerns over possible transfers as part of EUCOM's ongoing Sustainment and Stabilization Operations Program. Povejsil noted the Russian MFA's 13 Sept public objection to such transfers which received widespread press coverage, but stressed that GOCR concerns stemmed primarily from their own requirement to assess the impact of arms exports. Commenting on the Russian protests (first voiced in diplomatic channels in June, ref B), Povejsil said Tbilisi-Washington-Prague information exchange could be a "useful forum" to approach the challenges presented by Moscow's protests. He believed earlier notification of U.S. plans to procure Czech arms for Georgia would help both Prague and Washington manage the delicate political environment surrounding the issue.

4) (C) Povejsil said he was determined that all Czech arms exports strictly follow the rules of the Czech licensing system. The MFA's role, he said, is to advise on the foreign policy implications of potential transfers, with the Ministry of Industry and Trade actually issuing the license. To that end, the MFA plans to undertake an analysis of the implications of transfers of Czech arms to Georgia in the context of overall stability in the Caucasus, as well as the Czech-Russian relationship and also the EU-Russia and NATO-Russia relationships. Povejsil insisted that the Czechs fully supported the interests of the democratically-elected Georgian government in building a more capable military. However, the Czech MFA would also have to ensure that Czech arms being sent to Georgia would not increase regional or internal instability. Future export license requests would have to be accompanied by detailed information on the destination, storage, and intended purpose of the material. Any requests to procure ammunition merely to build Georgian ammunition reserves would not meet this threshold.

5) (C) Moving to the Czech internal situation, Povejsil said publicity about Czech arms exports to Georgia would be harmful to the process. The average Czech could wonder why Czech arms should be sent to an unstable area. Povejsil observed that unhelpful public complaints from Russia on the issue had not/not been preceded by consultations at the working level (i.e., no diplomatic exchanges since ref B). He did not believe this to be a coincidence, but did not elaborate on possible GOR motivation. Povejsil asked that the United States refrain from raising the public profile of the transfers.

6) (C) Kaiser, who heads the MFA's arms-licensing unit, reiterated that early warning of U.S. intentions to procure

Czech arms for Georgia would help avoid problems. He also believed that exchange of specific information on the needs of the Georgian military could facilitate better Czech decisions on arms exports and alleviate Czech concerns about possible destabilizing influences of Czech arms in Georgia.

7) (C) Comment: The Czechs, while committed to ensuring a responsible arms export licensing process, have their own financial motivations for sending arms to Georgia, even if it means risking Russian disapproval. We know that a Czech company applied for a license for a major sale of arms to Georgia earlier this year (REF A). However, the GOCR remains cautious, and working-level staffers have begun to predict that licensing for USG transfers of arms to Georgia including those under SSOP, might not be approved, even in the case of applications currently at the MFA. If the U.S. is to continue to assist in the development of Georgia's military capabilities over Russian objections there are two immediate steps we can take to make this process easier vis a vis the Czechs: 1) Tell the Czechs earlier in the planning process. 2) Try to avoid a public debate with Russia on the issue. As we have done in the past, Embassy Prague is working on addressing Czech concerns about SSOP transfers to Georgia that are already in the Czech licensing application process. The volume of Russian complaints has now risen to a point where the Czechs are concerned about Czech-Russian and Czech-NATO relations. Post looks forward to working with Embassy Tbilisi and EUCOM as the Czechs review their policy on arms-transfers to Georgia. Effective information sharing on our objectives in the region may be the key to ensuring continued cooperation from the GOCR.

8) (C) Often Embassy Prague's first notification of a U.S. procurement of Czech arms comes from the Czech MFA when they have problems with a deal. This is also the case for transfers that do not involve Georgia. Embassy Prague would like to help ensure USG procurements of Czech military items are not refused by the Czech Government. Our ability to help depends on being made aware of planned transfers. Once the normal U.S. approval process for procurements is completed and implementation is being planned, implementers are welcome to send information to Pol-Mil Officer Brian Greaney, either classified e-mail: GreaneyBE@State.sgov.gov, unclassified e-mail: GreaneyBE@State.gov, or fax number (420) 257 532 1717. We will use this information to help address MFA concerns about each transfer. In order to overcome the MFA's standard questions, such information should include full itemization of the material to be procured, the purpose for which the material is being procured, details of secure storage for the items in the destination countries, and copies of any applicable LOAs and End User Certificates. This will be necessary even if the USG has hired a private contractor to procure the items on its behalf. Failure to provide this information in advance will usually result in licensing delays within the GOCR as they query Embassy Prague. GOCR refusal of licenses is a definite possibility in some politically sensitive cases. We would like to help avoid that outcome. End comment

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